



State of Wisconsin
Department of Health and Family Services

Jim Doyle, Governor
Helene Nelson, Secretary

September 19, 2006
For Immediate Release

Eva Robelia, Communications Officer, (608) 266-1683

SEPTEMBER IS NEWBORN SCREENING AWARENESS MONTH

MADISON - In order to give every child born in Wisconsin the best possible start, all newborns should be screened for potential health problems. Early detection of health problems can give parents and healthcare providers the information they need to consider appropriate and prompt treatment.

"Conducting newborn screenings is one of the least expensive ways to prevent developmental delays and many serious illnesses," said Dr. Sheri Johnson, State Health Officer. "The early treatment that can be provided due to the newborn screening findings not only improves the quality of life for newborns and their families, but also has cost-savings of long-term medical interventions."

Wisconsin law requires babies to be screened before leaving the hospital, unless parents object to the screening for religious reasons. Babies born outside the hospital should be brought in for screening within the first week of birth.

Screening involves a simple blood test performed by the State Laboratory of Hygiene that can give information about 47 different disorders, including Cystic Fibrosis and Sickle Cell Disease, some of which can be difficult to diagnose any other way. If a disorder is found, treatment can begin immediately to prevent problems with growth and learning. Early treatment can even help prevent more serious problems such as coma, seizures, or even death.

To ensure that a newborn receives the best possible care, parents should:

- Make sure their baby is tested before leaving the hospital.
- Leave their correct address and phone number with the birth hospital and the baby's doctor. If the parent doesn't have a phone, leave the number of a friend or relative who can find them.
- Bring the baby back to repeat the newborn screening test as soon as possible, if the doctor request additional testing.

Physicians and providers can also follow steps to improve the newborn screening process, such as encouraging parents to have follow-up testing done if necessary and asking parents if they understand the results of the newborn screening test. Parents should not assume that no news about newborn screening is good news - if parents do not receive the test results, they should contact their doctor.

To learn more about newborn screening, including more details about the 47 disorders involved in the screening, visit: http://dhfs.wisconsin.gov/DPH_BFCH/Newborn_Screen/index.htm or call the Newborn Screening Coordinator at 608-267-7148.

- END -

Wisconsin.gov

1 West Wilson Street • Post Office Box 7850 • Madison, WI 53707-7850 • Telephone (608) 266-9622 •
dhfs.wisconsin.gov